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THE FORTUNES OF A RARE PAINTING.

HOWARD GLYNDON.

1510, according to Vasari, Raphael, while engaged on the portrait of Pope Julius II., painted, simultaneously, another picture for the favorite church of Julius—Santa Maria del Popolo. It was executed on wood, and was 108 centimetres in height, and 84 centimetres in breadth; and it contained three life size figures. Mary, her sweet, motherly face glowing with celestial tenderness, is the light mantle which has been thrown over the slumbering infant Jesus, who, newly awakened, stretches out his little arms towards her with an expression of infantine joy. Joseph, now well in years, rests on his staff; and in seeming silence, but with a face expressive of deep emotion, regards the Mother and Child. The background of the scene is formed by the drapery of a curtain. This picture, together with the portrait of the Pope, was placed in Santa Maria del Popolo, from which it took its name; and both were exhibited to the people only upon high festival days.

In 1591, while Gregory XIV. was Pope, one of his nephews, the Cardinal Sfondraro, wanted these two pictures for his collection; and Gregory, at attaching much value to them, the church was forced to sell them to Sfondraro for 100 scudi. This exhibition of avarice on the part of the cardinal, excited great indignation in Rome—especially among artists and amateurs.

The Madonna del Popolo is not heard of again until 1595, when the Vice Chancellor of Rudolph II. of Bohemia and Hungary, in a report concerning celebrated works of art in Rome, mentions it as being still in the possession of Sfondraro. The Cardinal died in 1618, leaving all his possessions to the Church of Santa Cecilia; but no mention was made of these two paintings, being among the other objects of art which went into the possession of the church; and it is supposed that Sfondraro sold them at some unknown period during his lifetime, and between 1595 and 1618.

The real Madonna del Popolo, then, remained in obscurity until 1862, over a century and a half! During all this time efforts were made to trace it; and expert *connoisseurs* were more than once deceived by skillfully made copies; which were, from time to time, brought before the public and sold, at fabulous prices, as the original painting. Several persons, at different times, have honestly believed themselves in possession of the genuine picture of Raphael, and have greatly rejoiced hereat, until some unexpected development of circumstances has proved that they have been deceived. If we are to judge by the numerous copies made of this Madonna in the sixteenth century, it was, during that period, one of the most popular of Raphael's works; and among these copies was, noticeably, the "Madonna di Loretto"; which, by many, was considered to be the original, up to 1870. It is the same painting

which, in 1799, was acquired by the Louvre Gallery at Paris. There it remained until 1816, when suspicions were at once aroused as to its genuineness, by the appearance of another copy, owned by one M. de Scitivaux; which was so much superior, that it was taken for the original, and

Louis XVIII. bought it for the Louvre, paying 80,000 francs for it. The copy originally possessed by the Louvre was then presented to the village church of Morongis. But it was discovered, after a while, that the picture bought of M. de Scitivaux was also a copy; and it has been thus designated, of late years, in the catalogues of the Louvre Gallery.

In 1862 the real Madonna del Popolo was ascertained to be in the possession of a noble foreign family (residing in Germany) who did not desire publicity, in connection with the facts which have been given to the public. It has been traced from them back to the family of the Counts of Ferraris, who, in 1626, followed Claudia de Medici, the new made bride of the Archduke Leopold, to Inspruck, in the Tyrol; and who were prominent at the court of Leopold, as well as at that of his successor, Ferdinand Carl. From the Ferraris family it has been traced to the Medicis, of whom they were anciently the retainers. It was probably bought by the Medicis from Sfondraro. At any rate, it must have fallen into their hands during the interval between 1595 and 1618.

In 1867, Herr Eigner, of the Augsburg Gallery, was employed to restore it.

Through certain unmistakable indices, he, though ignorant of its history, found that it had, at one time, been used as an altar piece, during which period the continual heat of a taper, placed too close to the painting, had caused a charred stripe upon the left leg of the child, and this extended up to the breast of the virgin. The injury had been remedied later, but in a careless manner. Sunk in the wood, upon the neck of Mary, were found a number of small metal nails, which had, at some remote period, been used in fastening an ornamental necklace upon the throat of the figure. The disfigurement produced by the taper, may have been the original cause of the picture passing from the Medicis to their retainers, the Ferraris, inasmuch as its value had been impaired thereby. It is also conjectured that, at some period it was found necessary, for some unknown reason, to conceal the identity of the painting. This had been done by painting over, in color, the three streaks of golden rays of a peculiar character, by which the head of the infant Saviour had originally been surrounded; and afterwards adding halos, of a different kind, to all three of the heads in the picture.

But the most curious of all the alterations which it had undergone, had been effected in the following manner: A strip of wood had been taken from the bottom of the picture and attached to the top of it; and the curtain alluded to as forming the background, had been carried up over this new addition; and in painting over this extension the color of the original curtain had been so well matched, that, at a distance, it was impossible to tell that any addition had been made to it. It has been proved, beyond a doubt, that this piece of wood was taken from the bottom of the picture, because, on removing the layers of color, there was to be seen the original painting of part of the couch and drapery upon which the child is represented as reclining, and which matches exactly the part from which it was taken. This trifling change, while it did not alter the shape of the picture, or materially deface it, nevertheless threw

all the figures out of their original centres; and nobody, comparing a copy made from the Madonna del Popolo, in its original state, with the same picture, after alteration, would suspect that they both primarily represented the same group, in the same position, and with the same centre.

Every effort was made to restore it, as nearly as possible, to its original condition; and its genuineness is conclusively proved in a book, published in 1870, at Zurich, called "*Die Madonna Von Loretto*," which, while it shatters the claims of the Madonna of Loretto, at the same time indicates the original picture.

The "Madonna del Popolo" is now in the picture gallery at Castle Kyburg, near Winterthur, in the Tyrol.

A PASTORAL.

(Sweet Sixteen.)

JAMES MAURICE THOMPSON.

Now, just because that hateful artist loafer
Must hang about,
Daubing and painting everything over and over,
I can't go out!

I know a dell, locked in with hills and shaded
By sycamores,
Where, through a curving, shallow gulch, fern-braided
A trout-brook pours.

In spring-time there the violets are blowing
On rich, cool spots,
And by decaying logs and stumps are growing
Forget-me-nots.

There one who listens to the swashing streamlet
Babbling to June,
May have the thrilling idyl of his dream set
To a rare tune.

There all day long the wild rose shakes her banner
And fluttering wings
And songs are heard, trilled after the manner
Of happy things.

I've oft gone down to dabble in the water
On sultry days,
Or through the fragrant groves to loiter
In sweet, cool ways.

But now, I fear, my happiness is over.
What made me tell?
A tall young artist, all the way from Dover,
To sketch the dell.

I met him in the path where the big buck-eye
Leans on the oak;
He bowed and said:—"A Dryad! I am lucky!"
I barely spoke.

His tongue, however, seemed to be quite ready
With things to say:
"You are the queen of this wild country," said he,
"Come every day

"That I may paint you for the wee fairy
That haunts the place."
And then he added something light and airy
Regarding my face.

I told my pa about this charming adventure,
I think he swore;
I know he said—"You need the gravest censure,—
You go no more!"

And so, through all this golden summer weather
I pine to be
Where the violets and daisies bloom together
So winsomely.

And just because that hateful artist loafer
Must hang about
Daubing and painting everything over and over,
I can't go out!

CLOVER FARM, CRAWFORDSVILLE, IND., May, 1871.